No 115 • Autumn 2024

WOODLAND TRUST

Broadleaf

Goshawk country

Swoop in an explore our new ridgetop reserv

AGENT APPLE

On the hunt for a vanishing tree

Stemming THE FLOOD

Trees vs Water: why nature holds the key

WOGGLE WOOD

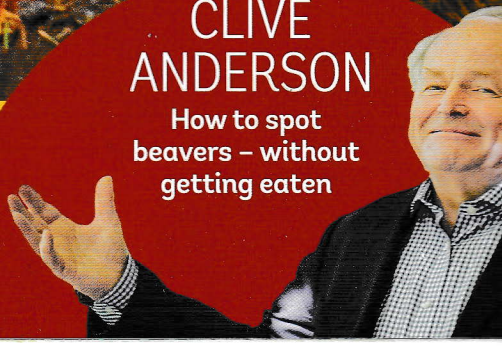
The Scout troop plotting a £1m woodland takeover

HERE, KEIR!

Five first steps the PM must take for trees

CLIVE ANDERSON

How to spot beavers – without getting eaten



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Welcome

Catching the worm

I'm an early riser, and on a trip to Cheshire this summer I took myself on a 5am stroll around Frodsham Woods, where the Trust has been reclaiming a one-time golf course for nature. It was just after sunrise, and mist hung over the 30,000 saplings there, freshly planted by volunteers and establishing beautifully. The dawn chorus was in full voice, a kestrel was hovering over the shaggy grass, and I felt like the only person in the world. The experience really anchored me in what we do and why we do it – it was the perfect tonic to prepare me for the hurly-burly of the working day.

Happily, that feeling is something our new health secretary also understands. Wes Streeting has spoken publicly about the restorative power of the Trust's Hainault Forest, his local wood in Essex, and the value of woodland to wellbeing more generally.

I met Wes at Hainault last month to talk about how access to nature could figure in his overhaul of the NHS, and we'll continue to remind government departments of the need to prioritise nature and climate during the challenging times ahead. So far Labour are saying the right things (see page 9), but the true tests are to come – on your behalf, we'll hold them to account every step of the way.

The new minister for nature, Mary Creagh, happens to hail from Coventry like me, so I've invited her to join me for a walk at Gibbet Hill Wood near Warwick University, which was planted by locals to mark the millennium. I'm sure its dawn chorus is terrific, but Mary needn't worry – I won't insist on a 5am start!

Darren Moorcroft, Chief Executive

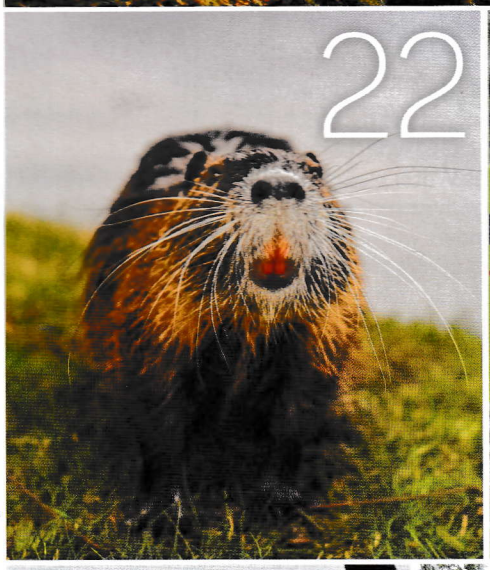
» *More from Darren: woodlandtrust.org.uk/darren.*

06 TREESCAPE
Does butter grow on trees? Can you plant a wood from a compost toilet? All your questions answered in our eight-page news round-up.

14 STEMMING THE FLOOD
From Scotland's Tweed Valley to Devon's Torr Brook, the Trust is taking on flooding with trees.

18 AGENT APPLE
The humble crab apple is facing the crunch: meet the woodlanders on a mission to save it.

22 TREES & ME
Clive Anderson shares his (midge) biting wit.



COVER IMAGE: MILAN ZYGMUNT/ALAMY; STEPHEN FLEMING/ALAMY; CRIS180/ISTOCK; MICHAEL HEFFERNAN/WTML; MATILDA SCHARSACH; DOUBLE HELIX IMAGES/ALAMY

Viewpoint

LETTERS • PHOTOS STORIES • DEBATE

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Knotty issue

» The impact of Storm Arwen on Great Knott Wood sounds traumatic *(Broadleaf 114)*, but why did you have to remove the fallen timber? In the era of wild forest, the trees would have rotted in situ, returning nutrients to the soil and supporting the evolving ecosystem.
Nigel Yeatman, London

Ed: You're right Nigel, fallen trees provide essential deadwood habitat for fungi, invertebrates and more. But in Great Knott, the trees we removed were non-native spruce and larch. Huge swathes of the wood were left covered in 6ft-deep piles of dense, dark foliage which would have taken decades to decay, smothering the ancient woodland plants beneath.

Reservoir dogged

» Over 200 ancient and veteran trees would be felled if Thames Water get their ambitions to build a mega reservoir at Abingdon. Something that is avoidable by securing water by other means such as fixing leaks, which would also help protect our chalk streams.

Thames Water claim they can increase biodiversity. They don't even know how many trees are there. Their paperwork says one! I hope readers will support our call for a public enquiry to ensure acres of watercourses, trees and hedgerows are not destroyed because it's best for shareholders. Sign our petition via cpreoxon.org.uk.
Chris Hughes, Oxfordshire

Green souvenirs

» Helen Laanest *(Broadleaf 113)* writes about seeking seeds of neglected trees such as wild service and small-leaved lime. Our village dates back to the Saxons, and they left us not just written records but green souvenirs in an abundance of both these species.

Wild service grows like a weed, according to a friend who battles the seedlings in his garden, where his hedge forms the parish boundary. One of our green lanes boasts small-leaved lime across its breadth: our county botanist reckons it took two centuries to move in from the edges, an indicator of when cattle-droving ceased here.
Heather Rendall, Wichenford, Worcestershire

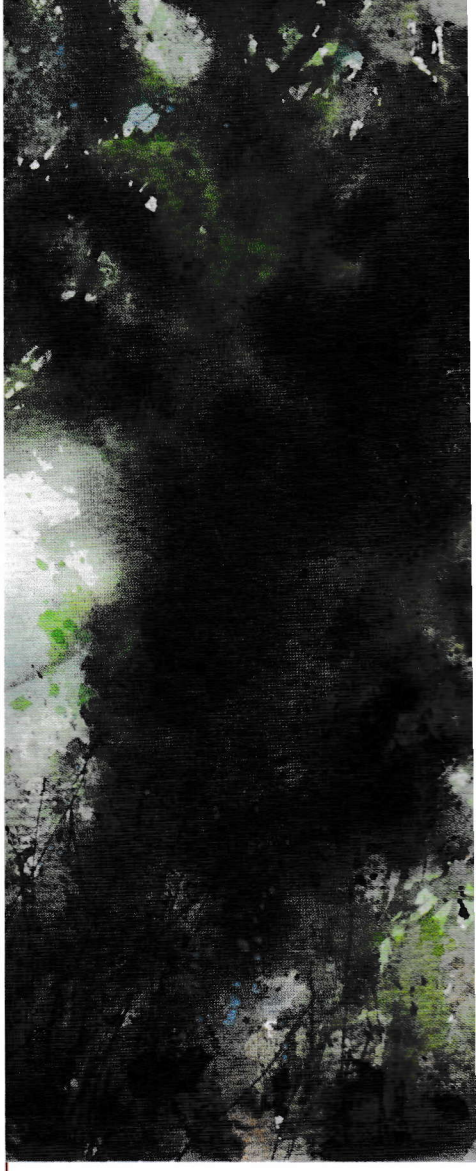
Verge of success

» On one of my regular litter picks on our street, I came across this beauty *(left)*.

My husband put in a notice to mark the three bee orchids we found, and the North Herts Council mower dodged around them. A small victory for our community, and an example of the treasures hidden in our grass verges.
Wendy Pitcairn, Hitchin, Herts

Listen up!

This issue of Broadleaf is available on CD for our visually impaired supporters; also as an MP3 version on SoundCloud. To order your free CD copy, email **supporters@woodlandtrust.org.uk**.



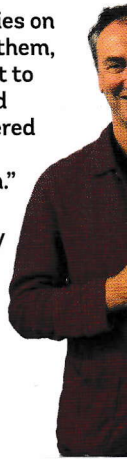
Picture this

"I found this oak tree *(above)* in a tiny remnant of temperate rainforest on a family farm in Bodmin, Cornwall," says Trust member Gary Cook. "The wood is surrounded by sheep-nibbled moorland, and has huge significance for its owner. Three tours of Afghanistan have left him with PTSD, but he feels significantly better when immersed in the rainforest, and now runs events there to help other ex-Forces personnel in the same boat."

Gary has been painting watercolours for a decade, after a 27-year career as graphics editor at the Sunday Times: "I started with wildlife and have tried my hand at coastlines, but always come back to trees. My first focus was on ash – when dieback broke out, I set out to highlight its 1,058 dependant species.

"This painting is part of a series on UK rainforests – I toured 15 of them, all the way from home in Dorset to the Lake District. I often embed shadows of wildlife I've discovered in the woods: this time it was a beautiful feathered thorn moth."

» You can see Gary's work at Harrogate's Watermark Gallery from September 27-October 12 *(cookthepainter.com)*.



Hooked on oaks

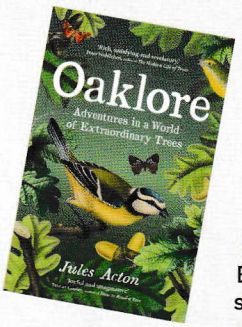
Jules Acton got so smitten by oak trees, she's written the book on them

I WORK AS a fundraiser for the Woodland Trust, and was inspired to write *Oaklore* by meeting the people behind Action Oak *(see page 7)*, which launched in 2018 to protect and support these remarkable trees.

"I was immediately struck by the oak's heavy-lifting power. No fewer than 2,300 other species are intimately associated with it, and ancient oaks are imbued with history and myth – embedded in our culture. Did you know there's an oak door at Westminster Abbey that may have been a sapling when the Romans left Britain in 410AD? Even earlier came the Druids, or 'knowers of the oak', who we believe worshipped in oak groves and made crowns from their leaves.

"My surname means 'oak place', so perhaps it was fated! I began prising open the worlds that oaks support, like the array of wasps that live in the tree, and leave behind galls shaped like marbles, helmets or hedgehogs. Silk button galls look like tiny gold coins sprinkled across the leaves.

"I made bread using acorn flour (delicious) and took to sniffing oak moss – woody and sweet, it's used in perfume-making. Baskets of it were hung around royal tombs in ancient Egypt. I spent time stroking oaks too, with the ecologist Brian Eversham in the New Forest. Tree snails live in the moss, just 8mm long, with a slender spire for a shell. It's easier to find them by feel than by sight. As Brian gently patted the trunk, passers-by gave us funny looks. 'Don't worry,' I called. 'He's a naturalist!'"



» *Oaklore* (£18.99, Greystone Books) is available now: visit shop.woodlandtrust.org.uk.

The autumn social

Your collected wit and wisdom from the Trust's social media feeds

"Our beautiful poplar tree delivers the wonderful sound of breeze through the branches all spring, summer and early autumn. Now I have the word to describe it: psithurism." *KarenHawton*

"Lammas growth is a second flush of leaves on some tree species around Lammas Day, August 1. It's most vigorous in oaks, and especially this year. Some of my saplings have put on 60cm shoots to add to spring's 30cm." *phenomenal_trees*

"Walking back along the coastal path to our camp site in St Ives back in 2002, there were hundreds of glow-worms lighting the way! I'll never forget that beautiful sight." *Helen Macauley*

"I had two tawny owlets in my owl box! I moved to Wales four years ago and rewilded our field. Both have fledged, and as soon as I hear them making a noise, I see their fluffy bums disappearing into the canopy. Many ordinary people are doing wonderful things to help our native wildlife too you know!" *Debbie Cawley*

"Did you know owls never mate in the rain? It's too wet to woo." *Paul Mathews*

ANDREW DARRINGTON/ALAMY

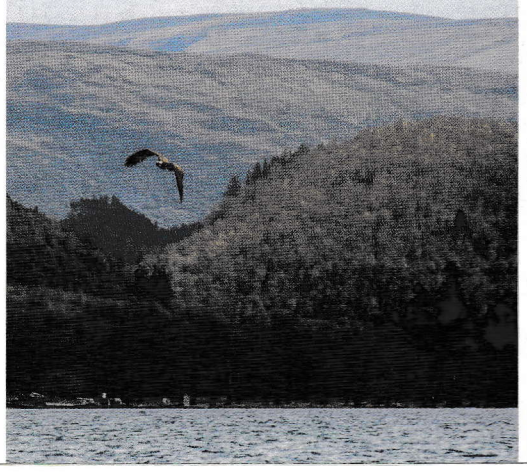
Watch the birdie

"It's never easy to put your paddle down and get your camera up – but when I spied Louis overhead, it was worth nearly capsizing for!" Edinburgh-based canoeist Gareth Overton captured this striking image on Loch Arkaig, north of Fort William – close to the Trust's much-loved live-streamed osprey nest.

"I've followed Louis and his mate Dorcha online for four summers now, and I'd joked that we might spot him on our camping trip at Invermallie. Apparently it's rare to catch a photo of him fishing like this: I happened to be in the right place at the right time."

Since 2017 Louis has seen 11 chicks through to migration, as thousands of 'osprey-cam' fans tuned in to live footage from the nest. This year, however, his parenting faltered.

"The chicks weren't getting enough fish, so we opted to translocate two to Valencia," says the Trust's George Anderson. "Perhaps Louis is getting a bit past his prime."



Treescape

NEWS • CAMPAIGNS • INSPIRATION

SCIENCE

Hollow victory

WHY DOES THE UK boast such a wealth of magnificent old oak trees? And how can we ensure they continue to thrive for centuries to come? Tree scientists are coming at this conundrum from both ends of the age spectrum – from acorn to ancient – with support from the Woodland Trust.

Researchers at Liverpool and Reading universities are exploring the mysteries of 'mast years' – when oaks produce a glut of acorns – as part of Action Oak, an initiative to arm the iconic species against pests, diseases and climate change.

"One theory is that this feast and famine approach is nature's way of purging parasites," explains Action Oak's director Annabel Narayanan. "We hope the findings will help both conservationists and foresters predict bumper seed collection years, promoting the overall success of the tree."

Meanwhile, the Trust's SCATTER project has used cutting-edge LiDAR tech to scan 40 of the UK's most celebrated giants, from the Belvoir Oak, in Belfast, to the gobsmacking Queen Elizabeth Oak at Cowdray Park in West Sussex *(left)* – roughly 1,000 years old and now 12.8 metres around.

Says Phil Wilkes, from University College London: "We've produced very detailed 3D models of each tree, so we can zoom in on every twig and hollow. It gives us unprecedented insight into how they have lived for so long, and may help us care for them in the future. Ancient oaks are sentinels in our landscape – their structure helps us tease out their history."

SCATTER's unique database will be open to everyone from tree surgeons to historians, and Phil has also created immersive virtual reality tours for each tree. "You can almost reach out and touch the bark and branches," he says. "It's about connection: these oaks belong to us all."

» The Cowdray Park giant features on an all-oak shortlist for this year's Woodland Trust Tree of the Year competition: vote for your favourite at woodlandtrust.org.uk/toty. For more on Action Oak's vital research, visit actionoak.org.

Butterfly position

New yoga escape boosts our five million planting tally

IT WAS BORN in a howling gale, but panoramic Arwen Wood has since grown into a serene sanctuary for outdoor yoga – and helped the Woodland Trust's MOREwoods scheme achieve a five-million-tree planting milestone.

"We'd gathered about 50 family and friends to help dig in our 1,000 or so saplings," recalls yoga teacher Chelsea Wills, "and then Storm Arwen hit. Our tent blew down, so at one point most of us were sheltering inside a compost toilet!"

That was in November 2021, but three years later, Chelsea and her partner Phil Johncock *(below)* are proud owners of a spectacular four-acre nature reserve set above Lee Bay, North Devon. Their scheme was 75% funded by MOREwoods, which is toasting its 15th year in 2024, and will supply its five-millionth tree during this autumn's planting season.

What's more, the couple have a unique connection with the roots of the Trust.

"Our landlady in Lee, Heather Booker, knew the Trust's founder Ken Watkins in the 1970s," Phil explains. "Both were members of the Devon Naturalists' Trust, and Heather told us how she urged Ken to follow his dream and launch a charity for the preservation of native woodland. She is 87 now, and it's been lovely to share our own planting journey with her."

600
kilometres of hedgerow planted by our MOREhedges scheme since 2013

This July Chelsea staged her first yoga session in a woodland glade, while Phil hopes in time to coppice the chestnut, oak and hazel for his artisan woodworking business. Barn owls and butterflies are already colonising, and the pair want their developing reserve to become a haven for the community to enjoy.

The Trust's MOREwoods chief Viki Gray says their story is typical of the 3,000 landowners we've helped to forge their own small woods nationwide. Funded by our partner Lloyds Bank, the scheme lays on not just cash but expert on-site planting guidance. And also going great guns these days is our sister offer MOREhedges, which has added a cool 600km of native hedgerow to the countryside since its 2013 launch.

"Plots as small as half a hectare are eligible to apply," says Viki, "though we once planted a whole island on Strangford Lough in County Down. Smaller woods are vital stepping stones for wildlife to move through the landscape, and that's why we insist a standing tree is planted along every six metres of new hedgerow, too."

» Inspired? For more on MOREwoods, visit woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant.

FARMERS GUIDE

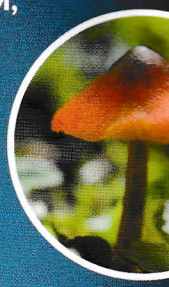
BLICKWINKEL/ALAMY; LEWIS AITKEN; JOZEF JANKOLA/ALAMY

DAYS OUT

EXPLORER

Three ways to add purpose to your autumn adventuring

GET A SHROOM, DUNDEE



Ancient woodland is perfect for winkling out fascinating fungi, and the Trust has teed up three guided walks this month at our Blackmuir and Huntly woods, in Dundee, plus Kinclaven, near Perth, all with expert mycologist Neville Kilkenny. "We'll search for fungi like brittle gill, found under old beech trees," Neville says. "We'll also look for waxcaps *(pictured)* in oakwood pasture, or rare destroying ange associated with birch. My hopes are high!"

» September 26-27; free but booking essential: woodlandtrust.org.uk/explore

GO NUTS, GWYNEDD

Ramble through Coed Felenrhyd, our rare and enigmatic temperate rainforest east of Porthmadog, while hunting for acorns, hazelnuts and hawthorn seeds. You'll be gathering for Welsh tree nurseries, which grow them on for conservation projects across Eryri National Park (Snowdonia). As you go, learn all about native trees an why local provenance makes such a critic difference to the success of saplings here

» October 13; free. The walk may cover several miles on uneven terrain; booking essential at woodlandtrust.org.uk/expl

GET WEAVING, LONDONDERRY

Willow weaving in the Faughan Valley can be traced back to the baskets once used by fisherfolk to carry Atlantic salmon home from the river. On our all-day workshop with crafter Fiona Doney, you'll use locally sourced willow – some from the Trust's own Red Brae and Burntollet woods – to fashion a foraging basket worthy of Red Riding Hood herse It's at Killaloo, ten minutes south of Der

» October 19, 10am-5pm; £60 per person – bring lunch. To book, contact robertwatson@woodlandtrust.org.uk.

WOODS ON THE MARC
Restore nature now! That was t
cry as 60,000 people marched
Parliament this summer to dema
a halt to the catastrophic loss of
wildlife. Hundreds of Trust staff a
supporters were in the vanguard
many sporting tree-based headge
and brollies adorned with leav

TREE MANIFESTO

Trust calls on Labour to draft a five-year action plan for woodland, as housebuilding threat looms large

FEARS THAT A GOVERNMENT drive to build 1.5 million homes will put woods and trees at risk have eased, after draft planning guidance preserved hard-won protections. But the Trust is demanding a new five-year masterplan that commits to boosting tree planting, restoring woods and strengthening legal safeguards.

In July ministers issued an open letter to conservation bodies pledging that "nature recovery remains a top priority alongside the need to overhaul planning," and promising "a win-win for housebuilding and nature". Crucially, their proposed rules for planners do not water down a ban on the loss of ancient woods and trees to development apart from in "wholly exceptional" infrastructure schemes.

Says the Trust's James Cooper: "We are cautiously optimistic about the noises so far, and we'll be lobbying this autumn to make sure these critical protections remain."

Before the election Labour announced plans for three new national forests plus a UK-wide task force to "plant millions of trees". That's heartening, says James, "but no hard numbers have been given so far, and the devil will be in the detail. If they focus on planting conifers in the uplands, it will have limited value."

The Trust has set out our own key priorities for government action *(right)*, and James adds: "Labour says it will review the Environmental Improvement Plan by the year end, to deliver on its legally binding targets to save nature. Alongside that, we'll be calling for a dedicated five-year blueprint for woods and trees."

SOPHIA EVANS/GUARDIAN/EYEVINE

IMPROVE TREE EQUITY

People's access to woodland is very unequal – canopy cover ranges from 45% in Farnham, Surrey, to 3% in Fleetwood, Lancashire. The Trust is demanding a statutory minimum of 30% trees in all new housebuilding schemes.

BEEF WOODLAND PROTECTION

Our oldest and most important trees remain vulnerable to development. We want UK-wide standards of protection and stricter rules on felling licences and Tree Preservation Orders, including lifting the £20,000 limit on fines.

DELIVER AN ACTION PLAN

Government tree planting is falling woefully short of target. We need a five-year action plan directing cash for woodland creation to areas where it can really deliver, like in the Trust-backed Northern Forest partnership.

PRESERVE PUBLIC FUNDING

We want a guarantee that public spending on nature recovery won't be dialled down in favour of market-based approaches – and a hike in the 10% 'biodiversity net gain' that must be achieved as a minimum by developers.

HALT COSTLY TREE IMPORTS

In 2022 the UK spent £260m importing trees, which risks the arrival of more diseases like ash dieback – estimated cost £15bn. Labour should help us expand the UK nursery sector, so we can grow more native trees at home.

Map magic!

MILES OF 'LOST' ancient woodland have been protected from the bulldozer thanks to a £2.5 million project backed by the Trust. Since 2019 researchers have pored over old maps, probed satellite images and LiDAR surveys, and visited woods in person to update the Ancient Woodland Inventory across England.

"It feels like being a detective," says Clare Durose of Natural England, which has led the mammoth undertaking. "And already the results look remarkable."

Ancient woods are over 400 years old, and for the first time the so-called 'Magic Map' now includes those of less than two hectares, and ancient wood pasture too. With updates for Devon, Warwickshire and Essex complete so far, a stunning 3,700 hectares (9,100 acres) of irreplaceable habitat have been added. Essex alone has seen an uptick of almost 25% on the original inventory, compiled in the 1980s.

Clare completed the Essex update, and says: "In places like Layer de la Haye, near Colchester *(above)*, we've nigh on doubled the woodland on the database, protecting it for posterity. It's been hugely rewarding."

TREE HEROES

Lucy & Andy Croucher

He builds the paths, she walks them: meet our non-stop Nidd Gorge dynamos

WE GOT TOGETHER in 1981 and joined the Trust soon afterwards. We've both loved trees since we were children, and it seemed such an important movement to be part of.

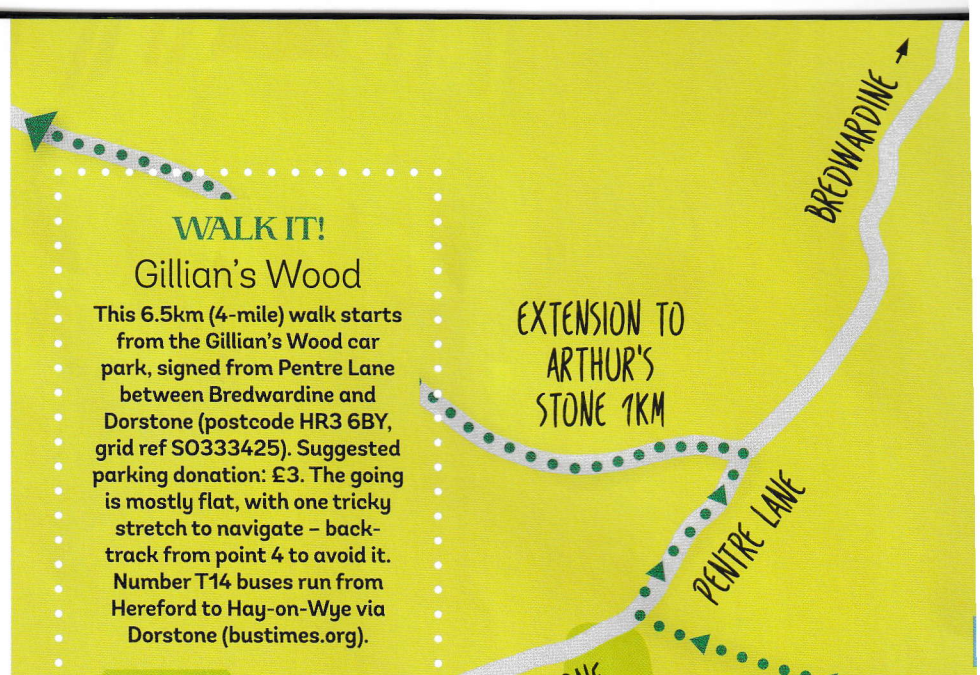
"We live near Harrogate, not far from the Trust's wonderful Nidd Gorge, where we both volunteer. Andy has worked in the woods, tugging up Himalayan balsam, cutting brambles and constructing footpaths – the wood's information board even has a picture of him, busily building a step. I lead guided walks, telling visitors about the coalpits and lime kilns that once underpinned the industry here, as well as other bits of history – we've got a hill fort, and some say Guy Fawkes once walked these woods. My tours are just like a chatty walkabout with friends.

"Andy is an ancient tree verifier too – wherever we go he's always peering at trees, checking out their girth and saying: 'I wonder if this one's on the inventory...?' He's added about 50, which is great because recording them on the Trust's register makes it harder to justify harming them for development.

"In 2017 we moved to our farm and set about planting 2,500 oak, birch and hazel saplings on the marginal land, to connect up the landscape for wildlife. They are proper trees now – at least twice the size of us – and thanks to our trusty trail-cam, we know we've got badgers and a young family of foxes, as well as hares in the meadows. We bought some more land in 2020, and fenced off an unproductive area to grow wild naturally. Andy scattered about 100 acorns, but the mice guzzled most of them!

"We first decided to leave a gift to the Trust in our will 20 years ago, and we've since renewed that pledge. We like the way you consider the science behind what you do, putting trees in the right place for the right reasons. We just know you'll do the right thing!"

WILDMEDIA/ALAMY



WALK IT!

Gillian's Wood

This 6.5km (4-mile) walk starts from the Gillian's Wood car park, signed from Pentre Lane between Bredwardine and Dorstone (postcode HR3 6BY, grid ref SO333425). Suggested parking donation: £3. The going is mostly flat, with one tricky stretch to navigate – back-track from point 4 to avoid it. Number T14 buses run from Hereford to Hay-on-Wye via Dorstone (bustimes.org).

AUTUMN WALK

HIGH AND MIGHTY

The panoramic new woodland reserve that's transforming a ridge over the River Wye

IN 1778 THE great landscape gardener Capability Brown was paid £100 to reshape the ancient wood pasture at Moccas Park – that's roughly £150,000 today. Fast forward 246 years, and this Herefordshire beauty spot is set for another big-money transformation, with the Woodland Trust's Richard Brown helping pull the strings.

In May the Trust opened Gillian's Wood, which commands a panoramic ridge 900ft above the Wye Valley. Six miles east of Hay-on-Wye, the £1.2 million wood adds 56 hectares (138 acres) of wildlife habitat right next-door to Moccas Park, which is home to a world-class array of fat old oaks, super-rare beetles, bats and fungi. And the entire complex has just been declared a National Nature Reserve – one of the first 'king's reserves' of the new monarch's reign.

Meanwhile, Defra has chosen the wider area for one of its 56 flagship Landscape Recovery schemes, pumping in £800,000 to scope ways to enrich nature and livelihoods across 32 square kilometres of farmland, woods and riverside.

"This is a really exciting opportunity," says Richard, our Herefordshire ranger. "Moccas Park is in the heart of the project zone, and a bastion of biodiversity – it's got oaks like the Old Man of Moccas, almost 900 years old. Our aspiration now is to buffer and extend that ecosystem, encouraging threatened insects and birds like wood warblers and pied flycatchers to move out and colonise the surrounding countryside."

First step for the Trust is to begin reclaiming the eastern half of Gillian's Wood for nature. Its centuries-old broadleaf habitat was decimated in the 1960s to plant non-native conifers, but we bought that tract last year thanks to a gift from the estate of Trust member Gilli Bulmer, part of the noted Hereford cider fa

"The new land more than doubles the Trus reserve on the ridge," Richard explains. "We on the western side in 2006, and our partne at Natural England have since been restorin recreating the kind of open wood pasture th Capability Brown knew. It's already idyllic, v sensational views across both the Wye and Golden Valleys, and full of bluebells in spring

All 100 hectares have now been renamed Gillian's memory, and you can explore the lo our easy-going four-mile circular walk *(right*

For Richard, though, the hard graft is only j beginning: "We've been surveying the dense, forest, and pockets of native flora and faun survive, including some immense old wych and large-leaved limes, uncommon survivor round here. But they are in the steepest par so thinning out the conifers around them to in light will require rope-and-harness work, we'll need overhead cables to lift out the tim

A wholesale woodland masterplan is also the offing for the new Ridge to River Landsc Recovery zone, which takes in Duchy of Cor land and more than a dozen farms. Del Jone from that project, says: "Our first two years be all about exploring what can be achieved

WORDS: VINCENT CRUMP; ILLUSTRATION: FIONA CIFALDI

6 FINDING NARNIA

Back at the T-junction, continue ahead briefly to a fork – go left. Descend and pass a carved piglet to reach the car park again. If you'd like to extend your walk, take the driveway back to Pentre Lane *(see map)* and turn right then first left on a lane which leads to Arthur's Stone, a Neolithic tomb 1,000 years older than Stonehenge. Perched atop the ridge, it is thought to have inspired the Stone Table in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* – Narnia author CS Lewis roamed these hills on his holidays from Oxford. The spur is about a mile each way.

5 PASTURE BEST

Keep going though the gorse, noting the ghostly trunks of felled conifers, left standing to encourage the rare insects that inhabit Moccas Park, which now stretches panoramically away to your right. Linnets and tree pipits are among the birds that nest in the shrubby habitat here. Ignore left turns and keep ahead on the grass, passing young saplings protected by split-oak cages. These are part of an intricate plan to recreate so-called wood pasture here, in sympathy with the parkland below the ridge, which was originally designed by Capability Brown. Climb steadily to reach a path T-junction – an optional diversion left leads to a monolith memorial to six young airmen killed when a Wellington bomber crashed on this hilltop in 1945.

4 SLALOM COURSE

This right turn sets you on an intrepid loop back through the depths of the forest – look out for a second arrow-post, soon pointing right. Now it's more or less straight ahead, ducking and weaving among the trees on a path that runs roughly parallel with your outward route. These shady reaches harbour goshawks – rare raptors known for their speedy, slaloming forest flight. Where the path threatens to peter out, aim left to shadow the wood's wire boundary fence, then bear right after a moss-grown oak. An occasional arrow-post guides you on to reach the steel fence at a pedestrian gate: take it and pick your way along the fence line (right) to arrive back at point 3. Go left, retracing your earlier route for 300m, then turn right off the main track onto a grassy path opposite an arrow-post.

MOCCAS PARK

GILLIAN'S WOOD

GILLIAN'S WOOD

1 HILL START

Gillian's Wood's car park is attended by a life-size wooden sow – a playful reference to surrounding Moccas Hill, whose name derives from the Welsh *mochyn* (pig) and *rhos* (heath). Of three footpath options, take the hand-gate from the right of the car park, into a conifer grove. The path emerges and ascends a knoll – the remains of a roundbarrow, where Bronze Age chieftains were buried on the crest of the ridge. Follow the path as it bends left, and when it forks after 75m, go right. Soon you'll reach 'Rob's Bench', commanding immense views of the Golden Valley, 400ft below. Beyond the bench lies a mini tree nursery run by volunteers, who've gathered seed from the ancient oaks and chestnuts of the nearby Moccas Park estate.

2 FOXGLOVE FIX

From Rob's Bench, depart the main track on a grassier path to the right, descending sharply. After 300m or so it levels out and swings left among gorsey scrub, spiked with foxgloves in summer. Meeting the wood's main surfaced ride, turn right, and stick to this wider track for around 500m, to meet steel gates into what was once called Woodbury Hill Wood, with Trust info board beyond.

3 BUTTERFLY EFFECT

Through the gate, your route is at first straightforward, along the forest track through a dense and jungly conifer plantation. Now that Woodbury Hill's 56 hectares are in Woodland Trust hands, the gloomy canopy will be steadily opened up under a 50-year programme of restoration. Remnant species cling on, including yellow pimpernel flowers and silver-washed fritillary butterflies. After almost a kilometre, keep alert for a low waymarker with yellow arrow, pointing right into the undergrowth (if you reach a turning circle in the main track, you've overshot).

Butter tub heroes

Volunteers hatch cunning plan to rescue historic avenue

GAZE UP INTO the tree canopy at Lincolnshire's Belton House this autumn, and you're in for a surprise – the sight of butter tubs hanging from the boughs. It's the latest ruse dreamed up by volunteers at the 17th-century mansion, as they battle to restore a magnificent mile-long lime avenue there.

Adorning the outskirts of Grantham, Belton and its deer park belong to the National Trust, but the avenue rescue is the culmination of a mammoth £1.4 million partnership with the Woodland Trust. Backed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the four-year project climaxes this autumn, having transformed both the eastern side of Belton and the Trust's Londonthorpe Wood, next door. Hedges have been laid, ponds revived and more than 1,800 trees planted. There are new outdoor classrooms and 10km of hiking, biking and wheelchair-friendly trails that link up the two landscapes for the first time.

"It's been a heck of a journey," says our own Heather Cook. "We've staged 280 events for 5,000 visitors, hosted 1,200 schoolchildren and trained 39 jobless youngsters in woodland skills. We've enabled outings for sound therapy patients, recovering addicts and others. But what's special for me is that locals have made it happen – many of our 88 volunteers will stay involved here, whether as walking guides, wildlife surveyors or history researchers."

Belton's famous East Avenue dates in part to 1640, making it older than the stately manor itself. But back in 2019 it was ailing, its hollow old limes and horse chestnuts collapsing under their own weight. "One consultant even advised us to fell the lot and start from scratch," recalls head ranger Chris Shaw. "But we were determined to do all we could to conserve it.

"Every one of the 340 trees now has its own health prescription, but we need to fill the gaps left by those our surgeons couldn't save."

Enter the dynamic duo of Leslye Carr and Avril Gibbons, who volunteered to start a tree nursery in the grounds, gathering conkers and taking cuttings from the avenue's giants.

"I'm a keen gardener, but trees are a different ball game," smiles Leslye *(left)*, a retired headteacher. "The squirrels dug up our chestnuts, so we had to rig a special cage to repel them. And limes are notoriously hard to propagate – all our cuttings pretty much perished the first summer."

An attempt to grow from seed has produced just 13 trees, so the latest plan is grafting, which is where those treetop butter tubs come in: "We plan to go up in a cherrypicker, above the reach of hungry deer, and peel bark off some pencil-thin shoots. By packing them in soil-filled tubs, they should sprout roots, which we can later harvest as ready-made saplings."

Meanwhile, plans are afoot this December for a big planting party, where 100 or so folk who've helped on the wider project will each add a nursery-grown chestnut to the avenue. Says Heather Cook: "It should be a lovely way for people to leave their personal stamp here."

» Londonthorpe is staging an outdoor photo exhibition this month, and has permanent new tree-ID and family activity trails. More info at woodlandtrust.org.uk/londonthorpe.

MARTIN CAMERON

The Trust's new wood in West Yorkshire will be powered by the people

LOCA

"THERE IS LOADS of community spirit around here. I'd love to dig that deep into the project – make this a real people's wood."

Andy Newton is the Trust's man in West Yorkshire, and what's enthusing him is our latest land buy – a former livestock farm at Hayhills in Airedale, where we aim to plant 42,000 trees beside Silsden Reservoir.

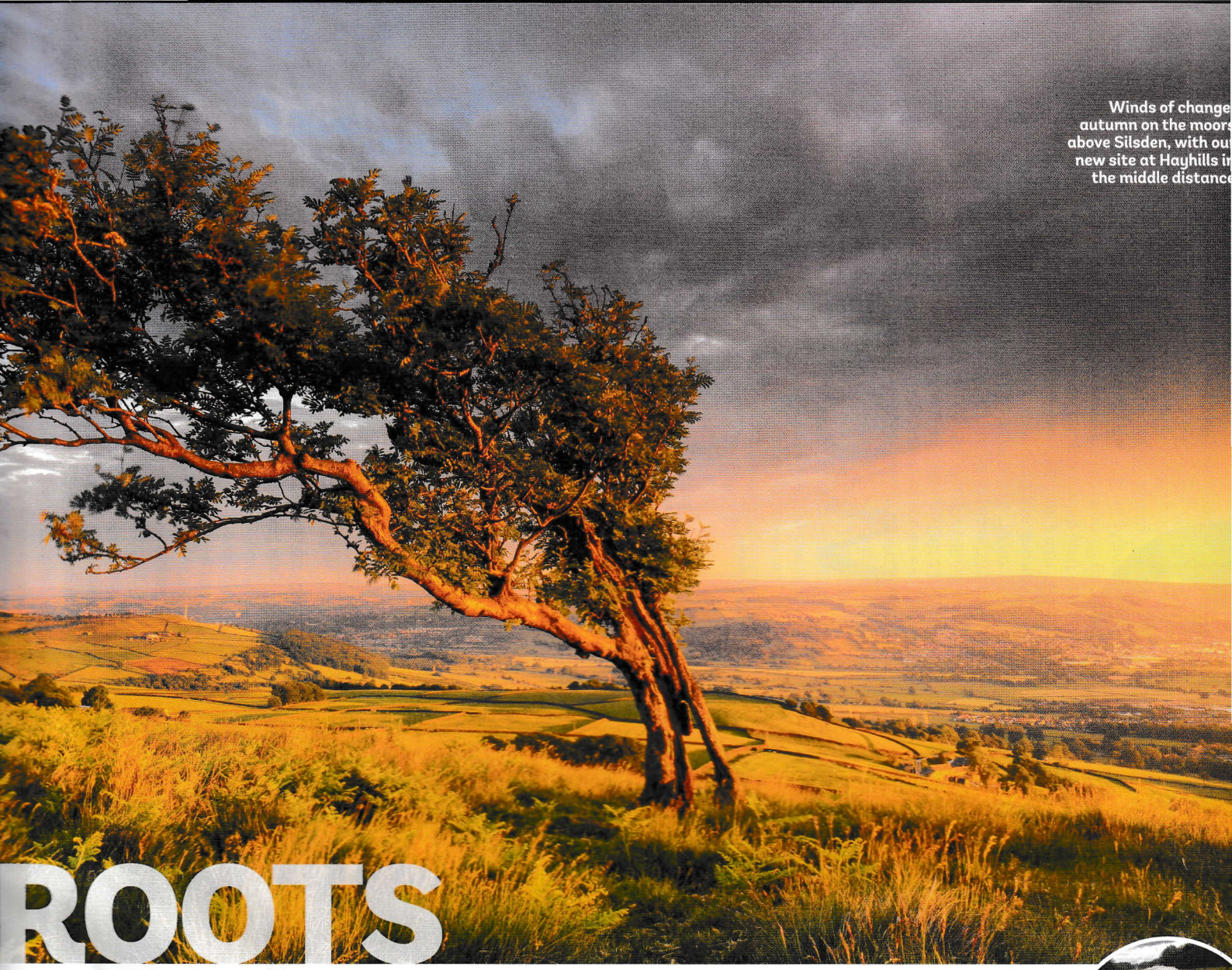
"Creating woodland here should be great for wildlife," he says, "because it will re-link a chain of ancient oak woods severed when the reservoir was built a century ago. Thirty acres of old woods were sacrificed – there's even an underwater sawmill down there!"

The land has been bought with help from a gift left by the late Gillian Bulmer *(see page 10)*. Planting begins this winter, and already locals are getting pumped up – the town of Silsden is a mere 15-minute walk down the valley via the Bradford Millennium Way.

"Everyone I've spoken to asks me how they can volunteer, when they can plant a tree. Even the farmer is keen – he is retiring after 65 years, and wants to leave a legacy here."

Andy has been inspired by our new wood at Frodsham in Cheshire, where all 30,000 trees were dug in by the community: "I'd also like to get people out planting from Bradford, which has some of the most diverse and disadvantaged communities in the UK."

JAMES WHITESMITH/ALAMY



Winds of change autumn on the moors above Silsden, with ou new site at Hayhills i the middle distance

ROOTS

COMMUNITY WOODS

Badge of ambition

AN ENTERPRISING MIDLANDS Scout troop is looking to add a surprising new badge to its armoury – for woodland management.

Not content with granny knots, raft races and camp-outs, the 172nd Derby troop has applied to take over an entire wood on the city's outskirts, currently tended by the Woodland Trust. Their plan for Hippo Wood includes an ambitious new glass-fronted meeting hub for sleepovers and activity days, projected to cost over £1 million.

The project is the brainchild of group leader David Thompson, who says: "Our troop has been without a fixed home for decades, and outdoor skills like bushcraft and backwoodsmanship have always been core to Scouting. So this would be a tremendous opportunity, and our vision is to sub-let all six acres, managing them for biodiversity and recreation with some guidance from the Trust."

Hippo Wood was planted on former playing fields at Alvaston as part of Woods on Your Doorstep, which saw the Trust create 250 new neighbourhood reserves to mark the millennium.

Transferring management to the Scouts feels like a win-win, says our own Nick Sherriff: "The wood has established well, but its trees are all the same age. It will benefit from judicious thinning to create rides and glades, and maybe some new trees in the understorey to vary the habitat. If the Scouts can pull this off, it'll be great to pass the wood directly into the community's care."

Architecture students from Derby University came up with the building's striking pentagonal design, and David says: "We hope for planning permission by the end of this year, then the task of fundraising will begin. Our troop is 60 strong, but the goal is to create a centre lots of groups can use and enjoy, including forest schools."

Left: Jupiter from 172nd Derby Scouts limbers up for life as a woodsman

TREES WITHOUT FRONTIERS!

HOW DO YOU get trees to the places trees don't traditionally reach? The Woodland Trust's answer: recruit a crack team of volunteer champions to spread the word.

This November we will mail another 550,000 saplings to schools and community groups, adding to the 15 million planted through our 'free trees' scheme since 2010. But the Trust's Steve Shill says some neighbourhoods are missing out: "We've compared district-by-district data on canopy cover and our tree-pack applications, and decided to pilot this campaign across six eastern counties, targeting cities like Hull and Peterborough, where take-up is low."

Twenty volunteers are being recruited as our boots on the ground, tasked both with raising awareness and giving advice on how to plant. Lined up to lead the drive is 34-year-old Namdha Atma Narinder *(above)*, who applied for the role having created her own copse of 100 Trust tree in a churchyard near her Windsor home.

Atma says: "I love my daily walks among the oaks at Windsor Great Park, and helping break down the barriers that deter some communities from coming forward to plant really inspires me

» Apply! Visit woodlandtrust.org.uk/planting

WOODS VS FLOODS

Could trees be the answer to Britain's flooding epidemic? The Trust intends to find out...

"ONCE WE'RE ON the hill, it comes down to 12 people planting sticks in the ground in a howling gale," grins the Woodland Trust's Doug Edmondson. "But getting here has been crazy. We've just added 65,000 trees on the Marsden Estate, near Huddersfield, and it took six years of planning. It's easier to build houses!"

Doug is talking about Landscapes for Water, a new £7 million partnership led by Yorkshire Water and the National Trust. By 2028 it will have speckled 300,000 saplings over five windswept stretches of the South Pennines, peppering new native woodland across the catchments of the rivers Holme, Calder and Colne.

That's great news for nature of course, but the prime motivation is different – to slow the flow of water into flood-battered towns like Todmorden and Hebden Bridge, which in February 2020 endured a month's

According to the Met Office, extreme weather is on the rise across Britain: its latest *State of the UK Climate* report shows that 2011-2020 was nine per cent wetter than 1961-1990. An estimated one in six homes in England is now at risk of flooding – including many in Leeds and York, where most of Yorkshire's rivers roll through en route to the Humber. Inevitably, traditional concrete flood defences are struggling to cope.

"For centuries these hills have been intensively drained to feed industry," explains Doug, "then compacted and scalped by grazing sheep. It has effectively left them like billiard tables, so when those heavy rains come, the water sheets straight down to the towns. What we're doing is adding roughness to the landscape, slowing its progress along the way."

The fancy term for this is natural flood management (NFM), and it covers a huge range of interventions, as our graphic *(left)* illustrates: not just planting trees 1 but felling them to create 'leaky dams' in riverbeds, or allowing artificially straightened streams to break their banks and find a more natural course. 2 The approach is nothing new for the Trust. As far back as 2012 we joined forces with Sussex Wildlife Trust to hatch the Sussex Flow Initiative, which has planted more than 100,000 saplings across sites upstream of Lewes. And since 2013 we've helped add 320,000 trees along the Eddleston Water, in the Scottish Borders, where 2.5km of river has been 're-meandered' to slow the flow through the flood-prone town of Peebles.

Another focus is Devon, where our man Sam Manning is breathing life back into Dartmoor's rare temperate rainforests by freeing water from its human-made bonds.

"We're accustomed to thinking of UK rivers as deep incisions in the landscape," Sam says, "but actually that's completely unnatural. If you step back a few millennia, they would have been wide-open wetlands, with perhaps two or three shallower channels and intricate networks of ponds and marshes, ripe with life.

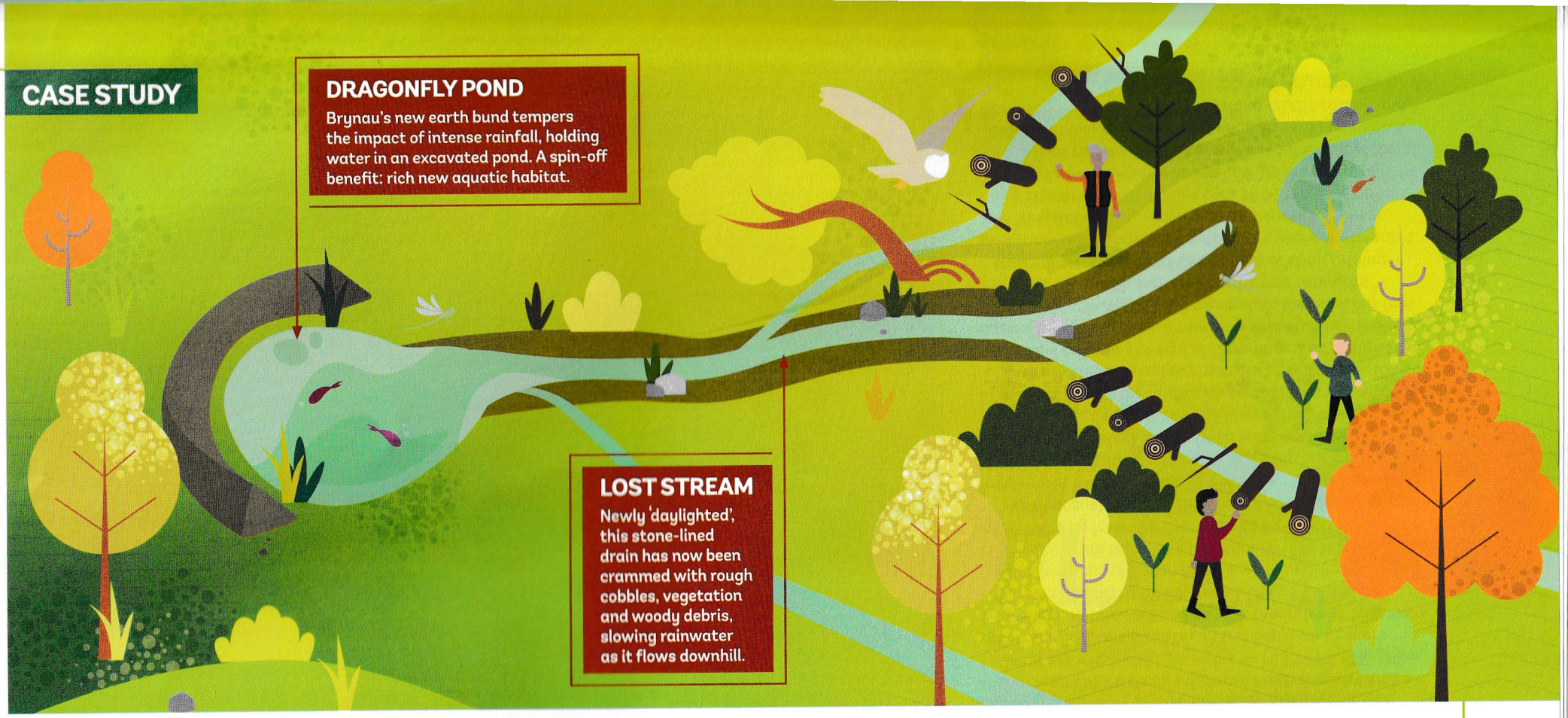
"We've domesticated our hydrology – between 1840 and 1880 an area the size of Dartmoor was drained for agriculture every year. So we now have a pipe-riddled countryside that's turning against us beneath our feet – it can't cope with today's storms and droughts."

Natural solutions tend to be cheaper than adding ever more hard engineering, they are more sustainable, and they deliver myriad knock-on benefits. Even so, Doug Edmondson concedes that NFM is a long game.

"It might be 100 years before the full impact is felt," he says. "That makes it hard to say to would-be investors: our project will save this many homes and businesses from flooding. But we're monitoring all the time – and our scientific projections look increasingly promising." »

WORDS: ELISABETH GARTON; ILLUSTRATIONS: FIONA CIFALDI

CASE STUDY

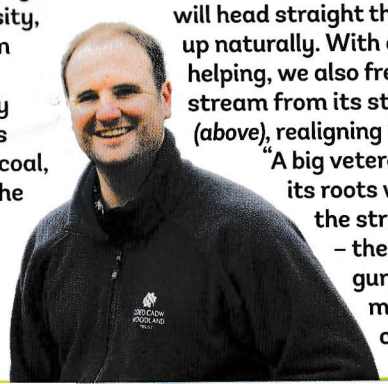

DRAGONFLY POND
Brynau's new earth bund tempers the impact of intense rainfall, holding water in an excavated pond. A spin-off benefit: rich new aquatic habitat.
LOST STREAM
Newly 'daylighted', this stone-lined drain has now been crammed with rough cobbles, vegetation and woody debris, slowing rainwater as it flows downhill.

WHERE THE RIVER RUNS FREE

At Brynau Farm in Neath, **Chris Matts** is masterminding the Trust's biggest new wood in Wales – and rewilding streams long ago tamed for farm and foundry

"IF YOU EVER want to set up a museum for drainage pipes, we're the place! There are thousands buried across our square kilometre of ground here – relics of a time when the aim was to funnel all the water off the hill as quickly as possible. These days, our goal is the opposite, especially in times of peak rainfall. Keeping hold of water is better for biodiversity, and stops it all sweeping down into Neath to flood the town.

"Brynau was the site of early coal excavations; in the 1600s they found two seams of wet coal, and the first drains went in. The 18th century brought copper and iron foundries, and stone-lined water channels were dug into the hill. When the land was converted to arable in the 1830s, it was drained again, then after the Second World War farmers were encouraged to rip out hedges and graze sheep. By then there was nothing to prevent water from barrelling downhill.



"To fix this, we've planted 150,000 trees. We can't dig up every pipe, but the roots of water-loving species like alder will head straight there and bung them up naturally. With our volunteer group helping, we also freed that underground stream from its stone straitjacket *(above)*, realigning it to its former course.

"A big veteran oak gave us a clue: its roots were reaching toward the stream's original course – then we heard the drain gurgling below, and it all made sense. We added clay and woody debris to bring the stream to the surface, and it is already being used by swifts and logjam hoverflies. Its insects will make it a good flight corridor for the noctule bats we hope to entice from the woods next door.

"Next we made natural weirs down the slope, using logs from a conifer plantation we're slowly restoring to broadleaf. They form a ladder, backing up the water as it flows. On the banks we've planted alder, willow and black poplar, the rarest native tree in the UK. Over time they will topple in, injecting nature back into the channel.

"We're underpinning all this work with hard science: Aberystwyth University is measuring how long it takes our young trees to improve infiltration, and how new vegetation reduces overground flow. We hope to see change inside five years – and big change by year 20. Watch this space!"

» As well as being naturally thirsty, new woods make soil more porous as they send down roots, and their foliage captures rainwater as it falls. But as Doug explains: "We use different techniques from top to bottom of the catchment. Peat moorland on the Pennine tops isn't suitable for tree planting, so we'll take a digger and scrape out ephemeral ponds that hold water high on the hill after heavy rain. We also plug the peat with specialist sphagnum mosses to create a sponge effect, absorbing both moisture and carbon."

Then there are those leaky dams, made from logs or brash and set into the snaking gullies: "They are often laid in H-shapes that only slow the water when levels rise. On rivers like the Eddleston Water, it means salmon can still migrate upstream to spawn.

"Elsewhere, we are taking scattered boulders from lost drystone walls, and splashing them into the streams to create stepping-stone waterfalls." 3

The Trust typically teams with a suite of partners to make these schemes happen: "Our role is to offer expert advice – perhaps designing the planting, helping to access grants, or assisting with the tiring and often treacherous task of establishing saplings in steep-sided cloughs under harsh conditions."

Trees and timber loom large in most NFM work. Down valley, woody debris is tipped into rivers – maybe fallen branches or trees lost to disease. On higher ground, giant 'wicker baskets' are speared into cloughs, big as cars and stuffed with gorse. 4 Says Doug: "Those are woven from living willow, which then takes root, growing to form vast nets which drag the water back. On the National Trust's Marsden Estate, we've put in thousands of them."

On a Trust partnership at Brackenhurst Farm, near Settle, so-called 'hinge trees' were toppled into the river channel, their partly severed trunks continuing to grow into the rushing beck. 5

"Willow is great for that – it's flexible and re-sprouts with ease," reports Jonny Walker of the Ribble Rivers Trust, which led on that scheme. "Oak and hazel work well too. And in January we joined forces with Age UK to collect Christmas trees, which we've pegged into riverbanks to stabilise them against erosion." 6

Bank erosion poses a serious threat to water quality and fish health, too – indeed NFM projects bring a whole raft of spin-off gains. And that's why down in South Devon, Sam Manning is dead set on an even more radical strategy: making like a beaver.

'Wicker baskets as big as cars are speared into upland streams'

"Beavers are the ultimate dambuilders," he smiles. "We have been mimicking their activity along a 500-metre stretch of Torr Brook, which hems the Trust's Avon Valley Woods. We've inundated a metre-wide channel with felled Douglas fir, raising the level of the entire watercourse so it now spills across a 20 metre-wide flood plain."

Sam's 40-strong volunteer group did much of the work – people like artist Emma Jones *(below)*, who says: "Raising the stream is already creating lots of ponds for amphibians and dragonflies, and it's been great fun to do – like being kids again!"

Termed 'Stage Zero', this technique effectively returns a stream to its infant state, and as well as slowing the flow, Sam has seen wildlife boom: "At Fingle Woods on Dartmoor, we widened a watercourse from one metre to 15 metres. Within months, the more humid conditions allowed yellow flag iris to establish, herons and woodcocks came in – and the number of dormice there now is amazing."

Sometimes there's no need to intervene at all – just let nature take its course – as the Trust's Iain Moss discovered while planting trees on the Rottal Estate, in the Angus glens. "The landowner had changed his mindset: he no longer fought endlessly to contain the burn, instead letting the adjacent field submerge at times of flood. It's about working in symbiosis with water, and valuing those wetlands in their own right."

Over time such efforts will be balm to the residents of Brechin, downriver of Rottal and still reeling from the ill-effects of Storm Babet last October.

"In 2016 a £16 million flood wall was installed beside the River Esk there, amid claims it would take a one-in-200-year flood event to breach it," grimaces Iain. "But in the last three years it has been topped twice – once by almost a foot."

Obviously trees are not a magic bullet, but as innovative NFM projects mature, they have the potential to transform the hydrology of entire valleys. So while our work may begin on a remote hillside, it could end up changing people's lives.

Changing channels

Four more ingenious ways to turn the tide on flooding

LEAKY DAMS, BOWLAND

7

The Wyre Rivers Trust will add no fewer than 1,700 of these clever H-shaped dams to tributaries of the River Wyre, in the Forest of Bowland. They come into their own after storms, retarding excess water while allowing safe passage for fish.

PONDS AND SCRAPES, SUSSEX

8

These don't just work high on the hills. A host were dug at Woodsland Farm, in the middle reaches of the River Ouse, by the Sussex Flow Initiative. When the Ouse swells, it now spills into the flood plain, fills the scrapes – and attracts house martins by the hundred, gathering mud for their nests.

FASCINES, SOUTH PENNINES

9

Thirty-five swathes of these brushwood bundles will add ripples of roughness to overgrazed hills across five sites in Yorkshire's White Rose Forest. They slow water and combat erosion by allowing vegetation to take hold beside bare banks.

EARTH BUNDS, LANCASHIRE

10

With the Ribble Rivers Trust, we've planted 600 trees at Acre Wood near Blackburn – and built a set of five earthen bunds in the fields. Typically 5-10 metres long, these dam-like structures use clayish soil that water struggles to penetrate, underpinned with logs and seeded over with grass.

NATURE FOCUS

ISTOCK.COM/BYSTUDIO; CRAIG JOINER PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY

"Once you get your eye in, you can spot them a mile off. True wild apple trees have twisty outstretched branches, wide blue-grey crowns and flaky bark. What's more, they often seem to *walk*."

Karen Russell has apples in her eye. The Cambridgeshire forester is perhaps England's leading tree-hunter, and her latest mission is to track down one of our most charismatic species – *Malus sylvestris*, aka crab apple. A new £60,000 project, funded by Defra and led by the Woodland Trust, is seeking to revive this increasingly scarce tree, the only apple native to Europe.

"The impression that they 'walk' comes because fallen limbs often re-sprout," Karen explains. "In fact the oldest veterans are prone to hollow out and collapse completely, only to rise again as so-called phoenix trees. Astonishingly, they somehow stay in rude health."

Crab apples love light, and Britain's surviving natives have become geriatric and solitary, cleaving to ancient field boundaries and woodland edges where they can soak up the sun.

"The old trees may be resilient, but new growth is virtually non-existent, due to poor light or because young shoots are palatable to sheep and deer," Karen adds. "Lack of woodland management is another factor, although the advance of the tree disease ash dieback sometimes brings a benefit, because as the crowns of taller trees go, more light filters to wild apples in the understorey below."

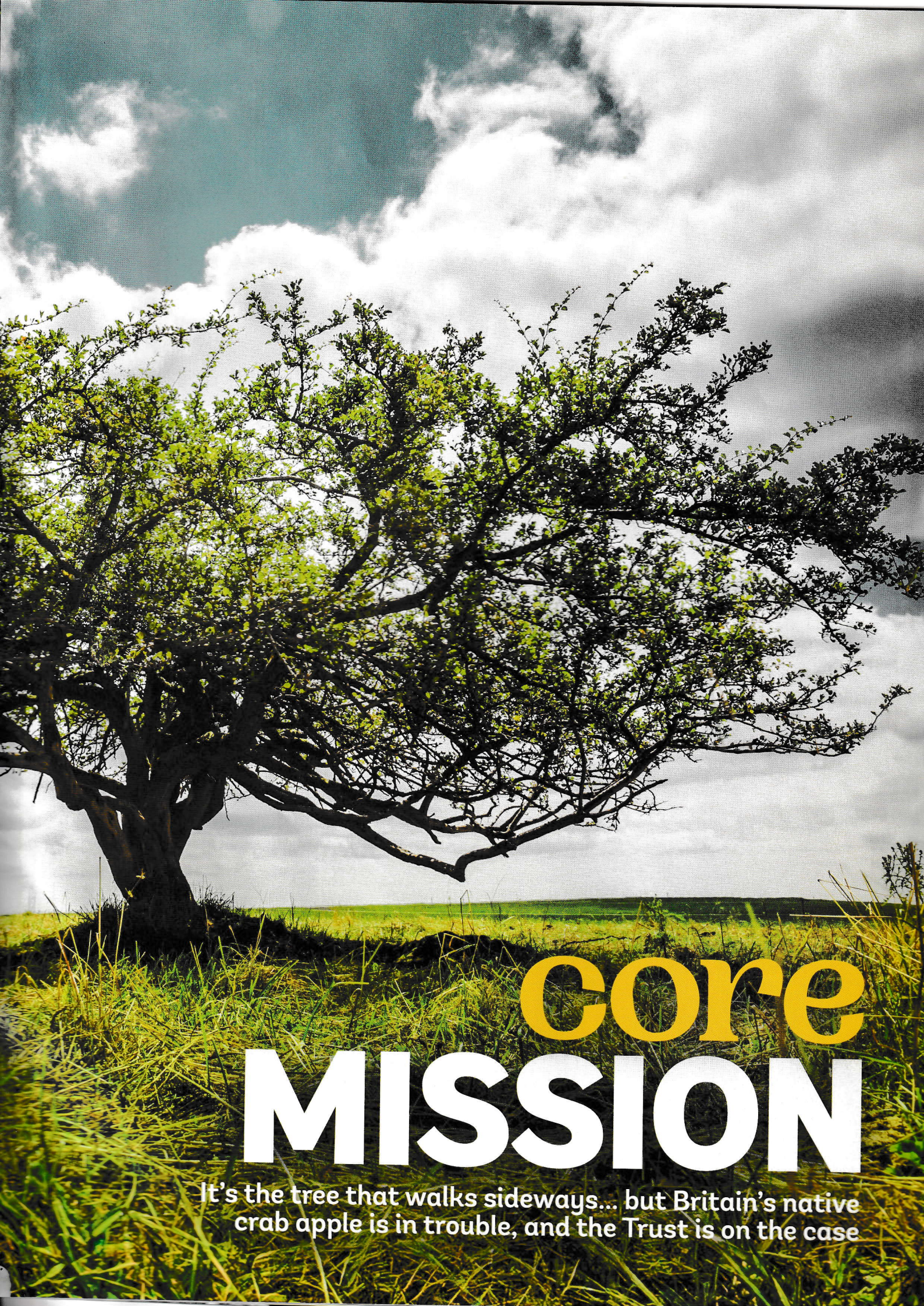
Karen has taken her fine toothcomb to 48 Trust woods in all, from Miltonrigg in Cumbria to Towerhouse in Somerset, and provided 130 samples to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. There, scientists will DNA fingerprint the trees to identify true wild apples, and check for hybridisation: cross-pollination by garden-hopping bees, which can introduce domestic apple strains into the tree.

"Hybrid fruit is larger and more misshapen, whereas true wild apples are classically round and neat. The leaves can be a giveaway too – large leaves with hairy undersides are unlikely to be pure.

"I'm hopeful that up to half my samples will conclusively prove to be worth propagating. The next step, funds permitting, will be to revisit each wild apple site, collect graft wood, propagate and then grow on saplings for seed orchards and nurseries in the future."

Crab apples are the ancestors of cultivated apples, and their green fruit rarely grow larger than a golf ball. Tart to the taste, they are great in jams and jellies, and an important food source for birds and insect pollinators. But the species was largely overlooked by researchers and conservationists until 2018, when the Perthshire ecologist Rick Worrell embarked on a Scotland-wide survey to scout their state of health. Rick's findings not only sparked Karen's own quest, they have inspired a 59-tree 'gene bank' orchard at the Woodland Trust's Glen Finglas estate, in the Trossachs. Trust volunteers did the planting last November, and the location was carefully chosen, on the picturesque shores of Loch Venachar.

"Twigs cut from apple trees in Argyll, Galloway and Ross-shire were grafted onto rootstocks to create the orchard," explains Hamish Thomson, our Glen Finglas custodian. "Truly wild apple is one of the rarest trees in Scotland – precise details are known for only about 300 of them. Most survive on crags or in far-flung »



core MISSION

It's the tree that walks sideways... but Britain's native crab apple is in trouble, and the Trust is on the case

Straight from the horse's mouth...
Meet Tarzan – a much-loved and cared-for logging horse who hauls timber while helping to protect fragile habitats in an ancient forest of the Scottish Highlands. The impact of work like Tarzan's is felt every day thanks to funding from players of People's Postcode Lottery, who have so far raised a magnificent £25,018,877 for Woodland Trust projects across Britain... that's what is called the Power of Postcodes.
Horsepower driven by people power
PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY
POSTCODE GREEN TRUST

Cidermaking in the orchard at Cefn Ila. Below: Volunteers plant out apples at Glen Finglas

» woodland remnants in inaccessible gorges, where hungry deer can't reach.

"Rick stumbled on healthy populations on a couple of islands too, after spotting apples floating on the waters of Loch Lomond and Loch Ken, in Dumfries & Galloway. And fully 20 per cent of those he found were phoenix trees, some attached to their original stump by just the merest sliver of bark."

Each Glen Finglas sapling is labelled with its origin site, so its seed can ultimately be returned there to repopulate the glens. "The more local the provenance, the better the chance of success. We've also placed the orchard at least 1km from settlements, to protect it from cross-pollination. It has been hard graft to create – literally – so we can't risk compromising its wildness."

In Wales too, the Trust has found that trees on remote hills are more likely to be pure. Step forward Paula Keen, who partners with landowners across South Wales to get trees planted and woods restored.

"I read Rick Worrell's report and was hugely inspired," Paula says. "Soon after, I spotted a gorgeous ancient apple at Bryn Arw, in Monmouthshire's Black Mountains, where the Woodland Trust has helped the charity Stump Up For Trees to plant thousands of saplings since 2020. It was the biggest I've ever seen: its hollow trunk somehow seemed to give it strength. It was in a hilltop location far from gardens and orchards. And I thought: 'Ooh, I wonder...'"

Paula gathered fruit and leaves from the tree, and later found six more likely lookers in local woods and pastureland. "When I sent my samples to Edinburgh, they were the real thing," she smiles. "I've since germinated some seedlings in my fridge, wrapping the pips in damp kitchen roll until they're ready to go."

Those have been planted back at the Bryn Arw reserve, where Sam Harpur of Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park has meanwhile tracked down 48 more *Malus sylvestris* – all veteran or ancient, most at least seven metres tall.

"I've also sourced 250 wild apple saplings from a tree nursery in North Wales to enrich the landscape here," Sam reports. "My highlight came in Cwm Oergwm, a valley near my village. We found 30 or so ancient wild apples on a farm, and have since added 40 more as part of our planting there."

It all adds up to a concerted campaign to restore this near-forgotten native to woods and fields nationwide, with the Trust in the vanguard. As Karen Russell says: "For me the project couldn't be more exciting. Our aim is to propagate a whole new generation of these fantastic trees."

» **Jelly, liqueur and tiny toffee apples... check out our favourite crab apple recipes at woodlandtrust.org.uk/crabapple.**

CRUNCH TIME

Three flavoursome orchards at Woodland Trust reserves...

CEFN ILA
Usk, Monmouthshire

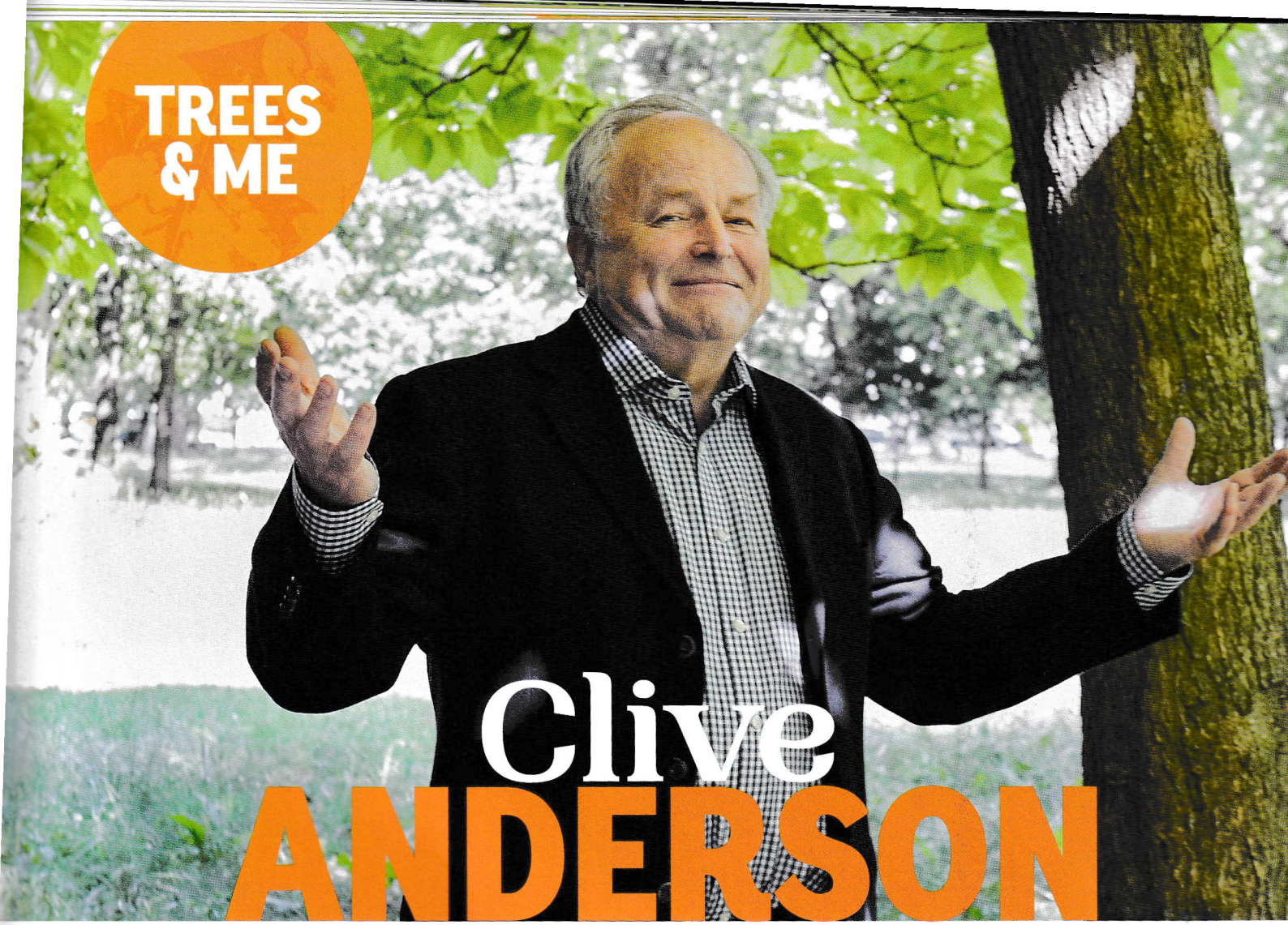
Cefn Ila's orchard once belonged to a Victorian mansion: around 70 original trees remain, including rare cider apple and perry pear varieties. It's believed the brew would once have supplemented estate workers' wages. Trust volunteers have planted 21 more, and stage occasional juicing days for visitors, who are welcome to scrump the fruit.

HUCKING ESTATE
Maidstone, Kent

When an old map revealed a lost orchard at our 700-acre North Downs reserve, local people felt inspired to revive it. Planted in 2012, Hucking's mix of Kentish varieties, from Pitmaston Duchess to the Vicar of Winkfield, is now yielding a modest crop of apples, pears and plums – and drawing bees, barn owls and amphibians to boot.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOREST
Heanor, Derbyshire

The Young People's Forest is co-managed by 16- to 24-year-olds, and they conceived its 200-tree Orchard of Hope as a memorial to all those affected by Covid-19. On October 20 we're holding a community apple pressing day there, but as the trees are so wee, please bring your own fruit! It's free and for ages 5 and up; email ypfmead@woodlandtrust.org.uk.



TREES & ME

Clive ANDERSON

I'd like to think the Woodland Trust was essentially my idea – one of many things I've seen the need for over the years but never acted on or achieved. In my youth I'd see trees being chopped down and think: "There ought to be some sort of charity that preserves woodland." But that was around 1972, when I was mainly messing about with comedy. Unbeknown to me, the Trust's real founder, Kenneth Watkins, was having the same thoughts at the same time – but he did something about it!

I became president after donating my winnings to the Trust on the BBC's *Ready Steady Cook*. Conservation charities rarely got a look in 20 years ago, but nowadays nature is up the agenda – not least because we're running out of it. Deforestation has a huge impact, from the small species of elephant in Borneo that's now critically endangered, to universal stuff like carbon and rising sea levels. Most people like trees lining their streets or shading a city square. They'd certainly notice if they weren't there, and be more inclined to make a fuss!

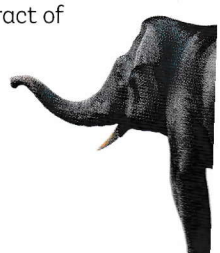
I grew up in Harrow on the edge of London, and spent hours on Stanmore Common without adult supervision, like all the other kids I knew. I wasn't the most gung-ho lad: I remember once stepping the wrong way into some muddy pond. Later, as a lawyer, I dealt with corporate responsibility, but that sort of risk averse thinking doesn't work around nature – who wants a fence around every lake and a sign under every tree?

After 20 years as Trust president, our Clive still nurses one big woodland dream

I spend a lot of time in Argyll, where we've pine martens, white-tailed eagles – and the UK's first officially reintroduced beavers, in Knapdale. Spotting them is tricky: you need to arrive a couple of hours before they enter the water, and quietly wait. But then you get acquainted with a much more common class of wildlife: midges. I am very much a person that midges bite a lot, so I douse myself in everything I can think of: yeasty patches, magical repellent clothing, a wristband bearing a herbal remedy used by ancient peoples, a hat. Anyway I got my beaver sighting, plus a photograph – which looks not a million miles from a rat.

Humans have a deep need to leave something behind, and planting trees comes from that place. When the Trust set about creating Heartwood Forest near St Albans in 2008, all 600,000 saplings were planted by volunteers. I did my bit on a bleak November day, flanked by a Muslim group, a Jewish group, a gang of Scouts. My wife and I returned near the end of the pandemic, and it was unrecognisable. Trees swayed over our heads – unmistakably woodland, and busy with people enjoying this lovely green space at a time we all needed it most. It was immensely satisfying

Near where I live in Highbury, there's a roundabout planted with all sorts of tree – an experiment to see which species best cope with pollution. I've long dreamed of finding an acre in central London where we could show off the UK's native trees – a sor of living encyclopaedia. People could compai beech leaves with field maple, tell English from sessile oaks, and learn which shrubs produce blossom or fruit. There'd be a boo with guidebooks, perhaps a Woodland Trust café. We just need one eccentric billionaire who happens to be stuck with a prime tract of land that they can't do anything with. Could that be you?



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WOODLAND TRUST

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